



# Plastic Bag Reduction Strategies



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# Plastic Bags are a Growing Problem.

- Plastic Bags are made from polyethylene.
- Polyethylene comes from petroleum, a nonrenewable resource.
- Plastic Bags do not biodegrade and simply break apart into smaller pieces eventually forming non-digestible “plastic dust”.
- It takes between 20 and 1000 years for plastic bags to break down in the environment.



## Plastic Bags are a Growing Problem.



- Shoppers worldwide are using 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags per year.
- Californians use 19 billion plastic bags each year with only 1 – 4% recycled.
- Almost all of the 600 bags used in the State per second are discarded. Once discarded, they either enter our landfills or our marine ecosystem.



## Myth – Plastic Bags are Free

- San Francisco city officials estimated that \$8.5 million annually is spent to remove plastic bag litter. That equated to roughly 17 cents for every bag distributed in the city.
- It costs the state \$25 million annually to landfill discarded plastic bags.
- Public agencies in California spend in excess of \$303 annually in litter abatement.
- Southern California cities have spent in excess of \$1.7 billion in meeting Total Maximum Daily Loads for trash in impaired waterways.



# Existing Law

## Assembly Bill No. 2449

- Requires at-store recycling programs.
- “Please return to a Participating Store for Recycling” must be printed on plastic carryout bags.
- Reusable bags must be available for purchase to customer within the store.
- Stores must maintain a record of collection, transport and recycling of plastic bags collected for a minimum of 3 years.





## Existing Law Assembly Bill No. 2449

Prohibits local governments from the following:

- Requiring a store not defined by the bill to collect, transport, or recycle plastic carryout bags.
- Imposing a plastic carryout bag fee upon a store that is in compliance.
- Requiring auditing or reporting requirements that are in addition to what is required by this law.



# Proposed Law Assembly Bill No. 2058

- Scheduled for Senate Appropriations on August 4, 2008.
- The bill maintains the at store recycling program, recycling notice printed on the bags and availability of reusable bags at store as required in AB 2449.



## Proposed Law Assembly Bill No. 2058



- On or after July 1, 2011, a store would be prohibited from providing plastic carryout bags to customers UNLESS the store demonstrates a diversion rate of 70%.
- A store that is not complying with the requirements may continue to distribute plastic carryout bags to customers for a charge not less than **\$0.25** per bag.
- Paper carryout bags are not covered under AB No. 2058.



## Proposed Law Assembly Bill No. 2058

A store charging customers for plastic carryout bags must:

- Pay 3% of the funds collected to the California Integrated Waste Management Board.
- Demonstrate that any revenue collected by the store implement specified plastic carryout bag recycling, plastic carryout bag cleanup and plastic carryout bag waste reduction programs.



## Proposed Law Assembly Bill No. 2058

Prohibits local governments from the following:

- Requiring a store not defined by the bill to collect, transport, or recycle plastic carryout bags.
- Requiring auditing or reporting requirements that are in addition to what is required by subdivision (d) of Section 42252, upon a store that is in compliance with this chapter.

**This bill does not prohibit adoption, implementation, or enforcement of a plastic bag fee upon a store that is in compliance with this chapter.**



## Banning Plastic Carryout Bags

The following countries and cities have or are considering banning plastic bags:

- China
- Victoria, Australia
- Australia\*
- South Africa\*
- Eritrea
- Rwanda
- Uganda
- Kenya
- Tanzania
- Somalia
- Bangladesh
- Botswana
- Sweden
- Germany
- Austin, TX\*
- Boston, MA\*
- Baltimore, MD\*
- New Haven, CT\*
- Phoenix, AZ\*
- Portland, OR\*
- Steamboat Springs, CO\*
- Berkeley, CA\*
- Bakersfield, CA\*
- Encinitas, CA\*
- Los Angeles, CA\*
- Malibu, CA
- Manhattan Beach, CA
- Oakland, CA\*
- Palo Alto, CA\*
- San Francisco, CA
- Santa Cruz, CA\*
- Santa Monica, CA\*

\*Considering a ban



## Banning Plastic Carryout Bags

### San Francisco

- Ordinance bans all non-compostable plastic bags and requires that paper bags must have 40% recycled content
- Took effect for supermarkets in November 2007 and pharmacies in May 2008
- Applies only to supermarkets with gross annual sales of two million dollars or more or retail pharmacies with at least five locations in the City under the same ownership.



## Banning Plastic Carryout Bags

### Malibu

- Ordinance bans point-of-sale plastic bags (both compostable and non-compostable) at all retail establishments.
- Takes effect for grocery stores, food vendors, restaurants, pharmacies and city facilities in December 2008 and all remaining retail establishments, vendors and non-profit vendors in June 2009.



# Banning Plastic Carryout Bags

## Manhattan Beach

- Ordinance bans all point-of-sale plastic carry-out bags within the City of Manhattan Beach.
- Beginning in August 2008, grocery stores, food vendors, restaurants, pharmacies and City facilities have six months to comply. All other establishments have one year.
- Exemption clause in the ordinance whereby businesses that show the ban would cause undue hardship may be granted a one-year extension to comply by the City Manager.



## Pros of Banning Plastic Bags

- Reduce litter on San Diego's streets, beaches, bays and parkways.
- Most effective way to drastically cut back on plastic bag litter.
- Significantly reduce the portion of litter found in storm drains.
- Reduce waste entering local landfills.
- Reduce the concentration of additives such as PCBs, DDT and nonylphenols in marine animals that inadvertently ingest plastics, which endangers their health and potentially impacts the larger food chain.
- Eliminate economic costs to remove plastic bags from recyclable stream that jams machinery and add to manual labor costs of recycling.
- Save hundreds of thousands barrels of oil annually.



## Cons of Banning Plastic Bags

- May increase the use of paper bags
- Creates less bagging options for consumers
- Consumers must pay for reusable bags



## Fees on Plastics Bags

### Pros

- Less opposition from bag manufacturing organizations.
- Effective way to dramatically reduce consumption.
- Generates funds dedicated to the improvement of the environment.
- Promotes reusable bag usage.

### Cons

- Cost to the consumer.
- Impossible under the current law.
- Complicated under the proposed AB 2058.



## What about Paper Carryout Bags?

- In 1999, 14 million trees were cut to produce the 10 billion paper grocery bags used by Americans that year alone.
- Paper bags cost \$0.03 to \$0.95 higher than plastic bags
- Paper bags use 4 times as much energy to construct compared to a plastic bag
- Paper bags use 84 times as much energy to recycle compared to a plastic bag



## Reusable Bags are the Best Option!

- Typically they are large enough to fit 5 times the groceries in a plastic bag
- Last up to 10 years
- Cost-saving to the consumer and the retailer.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend support be given to the City Attorney to draft an ordinance proposing one of the following options:

- Ban all point-of-sale carryout plastic and paper bags.
- Ban only point-of-sale carryout plastic bags and impose a fee on paper bags.
- Place a fee on point-of-sale carryout plastic and paper bags\*.

\*This option is not available until AB 2058 has passed.